

[Mobile Apps](#) [ePaper](#) [Login](#) [Subscribe Now](#)

Wed | Nov 27, 2019



90°F

32°C

 [Search](#)

The Gleaner

Jamaica WI
Established 1834

[Home](#) [Lead Stories](#) [News](#) [Sports](#) [Entertainment](#) [Business](#) [Letters](#)
[Commentary](#) [Health](#) [Food](#)
[World News](#) [In Focus](#) [Auto](#) [Social](#) [Outlook](#) [Shipping](#) [Art & Leisure](#) [Blogs](#) [Classifieds](#) [Flair](#)
[Jobs](#) [Radio](#) [Viewpoints](#)

[Mobile version](#)
[Subscribe to this feed](#)
[Join us on Facebook](#)
[Follow us on Twitter](#)

'I Am Not Extinct' - Jamaican Taino Proudly Declares Ancestry

Share this Story:

Recommend 31K

Published: Saturday | July 5, 2014 | 12:00 AM

[Previous](#)[Next](#)

Olive Moxam-Dennis (left) said though she always knew she was Indian (Tainos), they never discussed. It was her daughter, Dr Erica Neeganagwedgin (right), who

helped her to embrace her Taino heritage.

1 2 3

Paul H. Williams, Gleaner Writer

CHARLES TOWN, Portland:

WHEN ERICA Dennis of south St Elizabeth was in class at Hampton School in the said parish, a teacher told the students the Tainos in Jamaica were dead. There she was being told that she, a Jamaican Taino, was extinct.

But she said because at the time, students could not talk back to teachers, she kept quiet. Yet, she said she and another Taino girl resisted by calling themselves the 'Taino Girls'. In her own family, consisting of a Taino mother and an African father, there were eight children.

In the lot, five of them look distinctly Taino and one of her sisters embraces her Taino heritage. And an older brother has always believed he was Taino. But the siblings, who were born in England, are not interested in their Taino identity.

She is now Dr Erica Neeganagwedgin, a professor at the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research, Athabasca University in Canada, where she has been living for more than 25 years.

Neeganagwedgin said her childhood days were a life of the Tainos hiding their identity because they were afraid of being ridiculed. Moreover, many Tainos could not identify with themselves because they were told that they were extinct.

"It was always painful. I was always bothered, always felt hurt that I could not express who I am. I was also afraid of being ridiculed because of what is said about Tainos in the books," she told **Rural Xpress**. "It is very hard. Many people don't say they are All our lives, we were told they are dead We have been told they have all vanished."

Always knew

But Neeganagwedgin, who said her grandmother looks like a native American, stated she had always known she was Taino because of her looks, family stories, and blood memories. She recalled once driving in the back of a pickup, and when she looked up into some hills, she saw "a whole bunch" of Taino people.

She was told by an elder that she was having blood memories of her Taino ancestors. The hills, valleys, and plains of south Manchester and St Elizabeth have long been known as Taino territories.

She was brought up in the Pedro Plains/Treasure Beach area, and she said many Tainos live along the coast, and mixed-race people, who believe they are mixed with other races apart from Tainos, might just be half Tainos.

"Tainos are alive and well throughout Jamaica - just that many people do not know." She said people are more concerned with other issues than those of identity. "The Government knows that we exist, and I know that the Government knows that there are Taino people in St Elizabeth," she said.

Neeganagwedgin said the issue of identity was important to her as she is a proud Taino.

She had always wanted to speak about her Taino identity, did her research, and the Charles Town Maroon conference came up.

At the conference in June, she presented a paper called 'My Taino Nation: Identity, Indigeneity, Resurgence' and Self-determination'. She said she fought back tears during the emotional presentation.

Neeganagwedgin identifies herself as 100 per cent African and Taino. She wants to create an awareness in Jamaica of the presence of Jamaican Tainos, especially along the south coast. She also wants the big lie about the Tainos to be changed in the history books. She herself will be writing a book about her life as a Taino in Jamaica.

rural@gleanerjm.com

Photos by Paul Williams

Share this Story:

Recommend 31K

Comments for this thread are now closed



20 Comments

Jamaica-Gleaner

Login

Recommend 6

Tweet

Share

Sort by Best

Like this article?

Subscribe to Jamaica-Gleaner to receive daily updates of the latest articles delivered straight to your inbox.

Enter email address

Subscribe

[Hide this message](#)

Subscribe

Add Disqus to your siteAdd DisqusAdd

Disqus' Privacy PolicyPrivacy PolicyPrivacy

[More Lead Stories](#)

[Email this story](#)

[Print this page](#)

[E-mail the editor](#)

More Stories

[\\$13m pink slip - Former eGovJa CEO gets out-of-court settlement; Williams quizzed on tablets-in-schools hold-up](#)

[Beheading Trial | 'I hope they get the sentence they deserve' - Relative elated at fourth conviction for double murder; killers to know jail time Dec 11](#)

[Join fight against women abusers – Grange](#)

[Gov't to resurrect NIDS with focus on ICT](#)

[Holness says STEM schools will be performance-based](#)

[Falmouth business operators flouting 'scandal' ban](#)

[Families reeling with pain as JCF mourns 43 'fallen' cops in a year](#)

[Gov't on learning curve on corruption, says Holness](#)

[PM defends STEM schools policy amid criticism](#)

[Press body turns up heat on PM](#)

Videos



[For more videos click here.](#)

Latest Blogs

[Fifteen Strong and a Woman's Supportive Voice](#)

[DRAG RIVALS 5 THE BADDEST BMW AT JAMWEST](#)

[Didn't We Just Forget World Toilet Day](#)

[TIME ATTACK CAR PORN SHOULD BE ILLEGAL](#)

[Fairs around town](#)

Top Jobs

Hotel Manager

Shirley Retreat Hotel

CREDIT OFFICER

Not Specified

The Gleaner Archives

Digital Archives: Online editions 2006-Now
Library: Research and Assistance
Print Archives: Editions 1834-Present

Gleaner Your Way

Mobile: Get the Gleaner on your mobile
Newsletter: Get headline news
RSS Feeds
Gallery
Games
Videos

GCML Websites

The Star
Gleaner Classifieds
Go Jamaica
Hospitality Jamaica
Gleaner - North America
Youthlink
Voice UK
Flair

GCML Websites

Business Directory
Restaurant Week
Discover Jamaica
Go Jamaica Hosting
First Look
Sports Jamaica
diGJamaica
Weather

Gleaner Links

Our Products
Advertise with us
About Us
Contact Us
Suggestion
Subscription
Terms and Conditions
Submit a Letter
Privacy Policy
RJRGLEANER Merger
Q&A

Copyright © 2019 The Gleaner Company (Media) Limited. A member of the RJRGLEANER Communications Group. All Rights Reserved.